

REMARKS

This amendment is responsive to Office Action dated January 12, 2006. Claims 1 - 17 are pending in this application. Claims 4 - 16 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1 - 3 and 17 are rejected. Reexamination is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

These remarks follow the order of the outstanding Office Action beginning at page one thereof.

Claim for Priority

This case was filed as a PCT application. The priority document should have been supplied by the International Bureau. It is requested that the Examiner conduct a search for this document. If it is not found, it is requested that the undersigned be telephoned so that a substitute can be obtained.

Election/Restriction

The Examiner's characterization of the restriction requirement is correct.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

Claims 1 - 3 and 17 as originally presented were rejected as being unpatentable over Longley (A) in view of Zsebo et al. (B).

In light of this rejection, Applicant has now amended the claims to recite that the step is contacting of epidermal keratinocytes.

Longley describes a method of identifying a compound, which potentially treats a skin response in mammal skin, which method relies on use of a hyperpigmented transgenic mouse, which expresses SCF. That is, Longley's method needs to use a transgenic mouse to screen out a potentially active compound, which is expensive and is not preferable from the standpoint of protecting animals.

The present invention is based on a discovery that SCF production or release can be promoted by stimulation of epidermal keratinocytes (for example, see the second paragraph on page 2, page 3, line 23, page 8, line 31, page 10, lines 20 - 22, as well as Experimental Examples 1 to 3 of the specification) which is not obvious from the prior art of record.

Although it was known that production and release of SCF may cause skin disease such as pruritus or the like, which may be caused by some kind of stimulation, e.g., drying or chemical stimulation, this does not suggest or indicate that expression of SCF can be directly accelerated by subjecting the cell, i.e. epidermal keratinocyte, to such a stimulation. None of the references teach or suggest that such a stimulation of epidermal keratinocyte accelerates the expression level of SCF therein. The now claimed invention is not obvious in view of the

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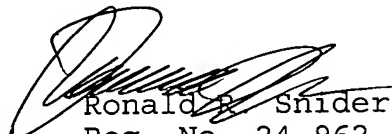
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disclosures in Longley and Zsebo because of the new limitation.

The claimed screening method does not use a transgenic mouse as a whole, and is advantageously carried out by use of cultured epidermal keratinocytes.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance, and early action in accordance thereof is requested. In the event there is any reason why the application cannot be allowed in this current condition, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned at the number listed below to resolve any problems by Interview or Examiner's Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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RRS/bam